



AGING-IN-PLACE KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Aging-in-Place Task Force is to formulate recommendations to Borough Council for measures to improve the quality of life of and reduce barriers faced by residents of Swarthmore who desire to remain in the Borough throughout their lives.

KEY FINDINGS

- The needs and values of those who wish to age-in-place often mirror those of all ages and include the love of living in Swarthmore, the desire to walk to various destinations, and the wish to reside in an active intergenerational community.
- There are a lot of resources available to Swarthmoreans to help them successfully age in place, but information about those resources is not centralized or easily accessible.
- There are far too many aging Swarthmoreans who are isolated, lonely and could benefit from the recommendations the Task Force is making.
- Many of the needs of those aging in place in Swarthmore could be filled by volunteer efforts of their fellow Swarthmoreans, but there is no entity to connect volunteers to persons with needs.
- There is not enough diverse, accessible and affordable housing in Swarthmore to house those who want to age in place here.
- Work needs to be done by the Borough, homeowners, Swarthmore businesses and SEPTA to make Swarthmore accessible and safe for persons with limited mobility.
- Many of the resources needed to successfully age in place are located nearby, but outside of the Borough boundaries and are difficult to connect to unless one can drive.
- With increasing numbers of baby boomers, the unmet needs of those over age 65 will accelerate the current trend of having to leave Swarthmore rather than remain in the community, as the majority wish to do.
- Addressing the recommendations of the Task Force will make Swarthmore a safer and more livable community for residents of all ages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

Recommendation #1. Encourage Borough residents to plan for their futures.

Implementation recommendations:

- Provide resources, including regular programs and seminars, to help residents and prospective residents think about their options for continuing to live in the community.
- Encourage residents to consider the state of their existing homes and how they might need to be modified to accommodate physical infirmities, a smaller family, and perhaps live-in health care aides.
- Revise local requirements to ensure that newly-constructed homes and those that undergo major renovations are made accessible and, to the greatest extent possible, meet the requirements of universal design.

Recommendation #2. Establish an Aging-in-Place Implementation Committee to work with Borough Council and existing community organizations to determine how to institutionalize the recommendations of the Aging-in-Place Task force.

Implementation Recommendations:

- Limit the Implementation Committee’s life to a 1-year term to work with Borough Council on a time-phased implementation plan.
- Determine the best means to institutionalize on-going efforts to support Aging in Place into the Borough governmental structure.

Recommendation #3. Provide organizational and fiscal support for a staff person and accessible local municipal space to do ongoing implementation of the recommendations and be a resource to those who want to age in place.

Implementation Recommendations:

- Provide funding for the position of a Senior Coordinator, who will implement, secure funding for, and maintain the recommendations of the Task Force and Implementation Committee that are approved by Council.
- Utilize a new or existing local nonprofit organization, similar to Swarthmore Town Center, Inc. or the Swarthmore Recreation Association.

Recommendation #4. Actively involve older adults and engage the aging perspective in the municipal planning and decision-making process.

Implementation recommendations:

- Commit to soliciting input from older persons and senior organizations.
- Continue to have a Council member, in appropriate committees,, designated as a liaison with responsibility for the aging perspective.
- Ensure that older individuals are represented on Swarthmore commissions and that the commissions incorporate the needs and wishes of all ages.
- Seek cooperation from a wide variety of fields and individuals that impact older individuals (i.e healthcare, transportation, housing, architecture, caregivers, social work, public safety) to ensure that all components are considered in the decision-making process .

Recommendation #5. Create a Livable Community Vision Statement that incorporates the values and goals of Swarthmore, which can then inform municipal policies and initiatives.

Implementation recommendations:

- Work with the Planning Commission to draft a vision statement that speaks to the critical aspects of community life for all ages in such areas as housing, accessibility, walkability, social engagement, and health.
- Adopt a municipal policy statement that reflects Swarthmore’s future vision as a community.
- Incorporate municipal policies and recommendations from the Aging-in-Place Task Force into the municipal comprehensive planning and zoning revision process.
- Actively pursue implementation of goals with adjacent municipalities so that they are mutually beneficial.

Recommendation #6. Become a member of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Implementation recommendations:

- Apply for Borough membership and commit to working toward creating an Age-Friendly Community.
- Establish a citizen’s committee to assist the Borough in evaluating measures and priorities to implement, as well as ways to involve older people throughout the Age-Friendly Community cycle.
- Partner with other organizations such as Swarthmore College to establish cooperative programs.

Recommendation #67. Explore cooperative measures and organizational means to provide a full range of educational information and support services to older adults.

Implementation recommendations:

- Expand the Borough’s website to provide information specific to older adults, including community resources and links to useful websites.
- Create a public space for a Document Resource Center, and determine whether other non-digital means of communication are necessary to reach older adults.
- Determine whether there is an unmet demand for digital technology (such as iPads), and related instruction, within Swarthmore’s older adult community, especially for those who might be home-bound.
- If an unmet need/demand for digital technology is discovered, plan to meet that need/demand.
- Help organize a broader support resource network for older adults in Swarthmore and neighboring communities, similar to that provided by TimeBank Media or the Village to Village Network.
- Request that *The Swarthmorean* include a regular “Seasoned Swarthmoreans” column to list programming provided by organizations that cater to older adults, such as the Schoolhouse Center, The Dew Drop Inn and The Gathering Place, as well as other information relevant specifically to older adults.

Specific Recommendations

Social Engagement Recommendation #8. Coordinate existing indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as community resources, to promote intergenerational and older social interaction.

Implementation recommendations:

- Evaluate existing indoor and outdoor spaces in the area for current and expanded interactive (and accessible) recreational activities, meals, classes and cultural programs that would draw residents of all ages and abilities into town, and enhance the lives of older adults by reducing isolation and loneliness.
- Sponsor a weekly “Swarthmore 101” newcomers’ coffee that would give new residents of all ages the opportunity to connect, learn about the community, and learn about resources available to community members of all ages, including older adults.
- Work with existing community recreational resources, such as the Swarthmore Recreation Association and the Swarthmore Swim Club, to ensure that at least a portion of their programming, and all of their facilities, are older-adult friendly and encourage intergenerational interaction.
- Expand volunteer opportunities for older adults in the community.
- Encourage Swarthmore College or local schools to sponsor programs or events that would foster interaction between students and older adults in Swarthmore.

Social Engagement Recommendation #9. Encourage synergies among local organizations that already serve, or can serve, older adults in the community, such as the Swarthmore Community Center, Swarthmore College, Wallingford Swarthmore Community Classes and The Schoolhouse Center.

Implementation recommendations:

- Initiate a consortium of existing local organizations and institutions to coordinate information, services, and programming for older adults.
- Encourage educational organizations, such as Wallingford Swarthmore Community Classes, to expand daytime programming that might be enjoyed by older adults.
- Request that the Schoolhouse Center bring occasional programs into Swarthmore to provide Swarthmore residents with an in-town activity and to market the Schoolhouse Center to the local community.
- Determine whether existing social facilities could be modified to better facilitate regular social interaction and provide accessible space for programming.

Health and Safety Recommendation #10. Promote the health and safety of older residents.

Implementation recommendations:

- Identify an appropriate referral source that Swarthmoreans could use to find health care providers willing to visit patients in their homes, including consulting with the Borough's Public Health Officer, Dr. John Crawford.
- Implement a volunteer-staffed "friendly caller" program to make daily phone calls to check on frail elders who are living alone.
- Work with the Police Department to:
 - Create a data base to provide for the safety of elders or disabled persons who are prone to wandering.
 - Provide forms and information about a "Vial of Life" program, to facilitate the preparation of health information about frail elders, to attach to their refrigerators and be immediately available to emergency personnel.
 - Establish a program to enable elders to provide the police with information about how to gain access to their homes in the event of an emergency.
- Collaborate with other agencies to sponsor social activities and health and safety related programs.
- Develop a web page, phone number, and/or a kiosk in Borough Hall, where elders can obtain information about health and safety-related services.
- Recognizing the adverse health effects of isolation, promote social outlets such as The Gathering Place, The Dew Drop Inn, and the School House Senior Center with financial support if necessary.
- Ensure that Swarthmore Emergency Medical Services remain available.

Health and Safety / Transportation and Mobility Recommendation #11. Improve pedestrian and driver safety.

Implementation recommendations:

- Increase crossing times and road markings at key pedestrian crossings such as Chester Road - College Avenue, and Baltimore Pike – Riverview Road and Swarthmore Avenue.
- Expand the responsibilities of the sidewalk code enforcement officer to include inspecting the walkability of sidewalks, providing public education, and coordinating with construction contractors to install temporary barriers.
- Continue enforcement efforts and improvement measures to calm traffic on roadways of concern such as Yale Avenue, Swarthmore Avenue and Chester Road.

- Using older-driver federal guidelines, evaluate and implement safety features such as increasing the size of letters on signs, installing overhead street markings on major roadways, and making roadway markings more visible.
- Update the Borough's regulatory ordinances to redefine and apply clear sight triangles to road intersections with priority given to major intersections on Swarthmore Avenue, Chester Road, and Yale Avenue, and other well-traveled routes. Similarly, pass a new ordinance to apply clear sight triangles to existing driveways to increase pedestrian safety.

Transportation and Mobility Recommendation #12. Improve the pedestrian connectivity between destinations by making improvements to existing pedestrian routes and creating new ones.

Implementation recommendations:

- To better connect the north and south sections of Swarthmore at an important transit juncture, work with SEPTA and Swarthmore College to make the Swarthmore Train Station underpass accessible.
- Continue to prioritize and implement sidewalk and curb cut improvements, especially those that may not be constructed in the immediate future such as a Riverview Road sidewalk.
- Cooperate with the College to reinforce connections to and from the College, with consideration given to publicizing an accessible path within the College incorporating key destinations on the campus and in the arboretum.
- Actively pursue connectivity goals with adjacent municipalities, such as new pedestrian connections between Swarthmore, Plush Mills, the Community Arts Center, and the Leiper Trail.
- Provide amenities such as benches, lighting, and shade trees along key pedestrian routes, especially within the ½ mile walkability radius of the train station.

Transportation and Mobility Recommendation #13. Increase accessibility in the Town Center and throughout Swarthmore.

Implementation recommendations:

- Improve accessibility to downtown businesses by providing portable ramp information, requiring that a contact phone number be posted on the outside of each public building, and subsidizing the installation of ramps parallel to building front entries that have three or more steps.
- Conduct periodic outreach and education programs for businesses and property owners on compliance with current accessibility laws, including the Building Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and provide tax credits to help offset costs of accessibility improvements.
- Require a minimum 4-foot width for new and replaced sidewalks where feasible.
- Promote awareness and understanding by including safety and accessibility regulatory information and graphics on the Borough's website, with links for other resources.
- Seek grants to make Swarthmore and its businesses more accessible.

Transportation and Mobility Recommendation #14. Improve and promote public transportation and accessibility.

Implementation recommendations:

- Work with established transportation organizations such as SEPTA and Community Transit to increase public transit use through education, pilot use programs, and provide amenities such as covered bus shelters on Chester Road at College and Fairview Avenues.
- Work with SEPTA to make the Swarthmore Train Station underpass accessible.
- Work with SEPTA to explore increasing the elevated areas of the platform to aid in boarding and disembarking from the first step of the train.

Transportation and Mobility Recommendation #15. Explore systems to provide vehicular transportation to key destinations within and just beyond Swarthmore, to improve the independence and engagement of people who have difficulty driving, walking, or independently accessing public transportation.

Implementation recommendations:

- Lend support toward organizing a volunteer-based driver service, such the TimeBank Media system.
- Establish an inter-municipal shuttle that could link destinations like the Schoolhouse Center, the Wallingford Arts Center, grocery stores, or Media on a regular or event schedule.
- Consider subsidizing a multi-municipal 3-1-1 taxi service for qualifying riders.
- Work with Swarthmore College to organize a Swarthmore College event van service.

Housing Recommendation #16. Encourage the creation of a range of affordable housing options near downtown.

Implementation recommendations:

- Through planning, zoning and tax incentives, facilitate adding low-maintenance, affordable townhomes and apartments within a half-mile of the train station.
- Consider expanding multi-use buildings outside of the Town Center to provide additional housing and parking options.
- Through planning, zoning and tax incentives, encourage the establishment of one or more senior living communities, such as a Naturally-Occurring Retirement Community (NORC), an Intentional Community (cohousing), or a Green House (a group assisted living home).

Housing Recommendation #17. Provide opportunities for diverse housing options throughout Swarthmore.

Implementation recommendations:

- Modify zoning to allow a mother-in-law apartment (Accessory Dwelling Unit) in a single-family home or in a separate building such as a garage.
- Subject to location, change the zoning regulations to allow the conversion of large homes into apartments or condominiums.
- Consider a provision to allow temporary elder housing such as “granny pods”.

Housing Recommendation #18. Increase awareness of housing accessibility through education; modify Borough regulations to improve accessibility of homes.

Implementation recommendations:

- Expand the Borough’s website to include details on “Visitability” and how to make a home accessible.
- Actively disseminate accessibility information to realtors, new home buyers, contractors licensed by the Borough, and through the land development and building permit process.
- Expand the Use and Occupancy Permit to incorporate as many accessibility features as possible.
- Allocate a small portion of the building permit fee to promote and implement accessibility and aging-in-place in Swarthmore.
- For homeowners, provide a Visitability Design Tax Credit. For a builder or a developer, consider tax incentives for providing a percentage of accessible and affordable housing, or grant floor area ratio bonuses when visitability elements are incorporated. An impact fee for accessibility might also be considered.

Planning and Zoning Recommendation #19. Modify existing zoning and subdivision ordinances to be consistent with the Borough’s vision and policies.

Implementation recommendations:

- Revise general zoning sections such as the Statement of Community Development Objectives.
- Modify some specific code sections to reflect best practices, such as the definition of “family,” so that regulations are lifestyle-neutral.
- Review existing residential district zoning lot sizes and coverage standards to encourage the development of more affordable and diverse housing.
- Add guidance for the Zoning Hearing Board to allow aging-in-place accommodations when considering granting variances on the basis of hardship.

Planning and Zoning Recommendation #20. Create new sections of the zoning and subdivision ordinances to be consistent with the Borough’s vision and policies.

Implementation recommendations:

- Add new definitions to include a wide variety of housing types.
- Add an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) section that allows a separate apartment in a single-family residential zone, but regulates the details of the implementation and use such as the form and homeowner residency. Streamline the ADU approval process with the least cost possible.
- With conditions, add provisions so that existing large single-family homes can be converted to more than two-dwelling units.
- Draft new code sections that would extend the Town Center-type of design guidelines to residential districts.
- Provide a new overlay zone within about ½-mile of the train station to allow new housing types such as townhomes, large home to condominium conversions, or multi-family dwellings.
- Support revisions to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to facilitate mixed-use development close to transit, as well as reconfiguring lots to promote housing options, including cottage cluster housing.

Planning and Zoning Recommendation #21. Ensure that the master plan and zoning ordinances are consistent and complete.

Implementation recommendations:

- Review all sections of the zoning, subdivision and land development documents for consistency and completeness.
- Consider hiring a professional consultant to assist the Borough in updating code sections or suggest other modifications such as redrawing district boundaries, combining or creating new zoning districts.
- Consider preparing a new Master Plan to ensure that AIP recommendations and future ordinances are consistent.